

Youth 4 Socialist Action Organizing Handbook



A how to guide to organizing
for young revolutionaries!

Recruiting to YSA

An organization with members isn't much of an organization, and without organization, there'll be no revolution! That's why one of our main on-going activities is getting more people involved. And remember, all someone needs to do to join YSA is be in general agreement with our 10 Point Program, commit to trying to be active in the group, and pay \$10 a year in dues (which can be waived for special circumstances).

Ask members to invite others. Eighty per cent of volunteers doing community work said they began because they were asked by a friend, a family member, a classmate, a co-worker or a neighbor.

Leaflets, leaflets everywhere! For people to know about YSA and the events and campaigns we do one of the main things that always needs to be done is leafleting. That means putting up fliers on any and every bulletin board you can think of, telephone poles (though be careful since some cities have laws against this and the fines can be steep), dropping stacks of leaflets off at coffee shops, union halls, student unions, and other places that young people frequent.

Go to where people are. Instead of trying to get people to come to you, try going to them. Go to the meetings of other groups, and to places and events where progressive minded people gather. And always, always be sure to have a YSA presence at every progressive demonstration in your area. Banners, attractive literature tables, placards, and people hawking Socialist Action newspaper are a great way to project a presence, along with our message.

A newspaper with legs. Socialist Action newspaper is an excellent resource and way of introducing our ideas to new people. Getting local bookstores and newsstands to sell the paper, setting up literature tables with the paper on college campuses and busy street corners, and just old fashioned newspaper hawking at rallies and public places is a tried and true way of reaching out to people.

Look for ways to collect names, addresses, phone numbers. Have sign-in sheets at your meetings and events. At events organized by others, ask people to add their name, address, email addresses and phone number to petitions and requests-for-information. In return, hand out an issue sheet, or an explanation of how your group is attempting to address an issue.

Do surveys. Surveys are a good way to stay in touch, increase participation, and bring in new members. They show your group is willing to respond to a broad base of others, not just those who tend to participate in community activities.

Door-knocking. Door-knocking is the oldest and best outreach method. Bear in mind that it can be very time consuming. If you do decide to do door-knocking, we recommend door-knocking in college dorms and neighborhoods with a high percentage of young people.

Create detailed membership lists. Create membership lists with places for entering name, address, day and evening phone, priorities for local improvement, occupation, personal interests, special skills, times available, what the person would be willing to do, and what the person would not be willing to do. Consider using a computer to update lists and sort people by address, priority, and interests. With such a computer database you can easily bring together people who belong together. Membership lists can also form email lists or phone trees, which are a great way of getting info out quick and/or mobilizing people for a specific event.

Newsletters, Ezines and leaflets. Newsletters keep group members in touch. Ezines can be put together for free, and reach a lot of people by forwarding them over various email lists. And while they cost a bit more, printed local newsletters are also a great way of reaching out to people. Putting out and distributing leaflets about the group or issues we're working on is another great outreach tool.

Keeping People

Recruiting people to join Youth for Socialist Action is only the first step in building a revolutionary movement and training professional revolutionaries. It's important that we not forget about people once they sign on the dotted line, so to speak, but instead that we seek to keep people active and engaged in our political work. Below are some tips on keeping people:

Stay in touch with one another. Regular contact is vital. Face to face is best. But regular contact via phone, email and snail mail are useful too.

Welcome newcomers. Introduce them to other members. Consider appointing greeters for large meetings and events. Call new contacts to invite them to events, or to pass on information. Help people find a place in the organization. The most appealing approach is to say, "Tell us the things you like to do and do well and we will find a way to use those talents." The next most appealing is to say: "Here are the jobs we have, but how you get them done is up to you." Invite newcomers to assume leadership roles. If the same people run everything, newcomers feel excluded.

Pay attention to group process. Most activist groups do not give adequate attention to how they work together. Make sure the chairperson of all YSA meetings makes an effort to hear from everyone, so that everyone's voice is heard.

Discuss the group and its work. Set aside occasions when members describe what they expect of the group and what the group can expect of them in terms of time and responsibilities. This information should become part of your membership lists.

Keep time demands modest. Most people lead busy lives. Don't ask them to come to meetings if they don't need to be there. Keep expanding the number of active members to ensure everyone does a little, and no one does too much. Work out realistic time commitments for projects. At the same time be sure to politically motivate comrades to make time for what needs to be done.

Do it in twos. We're socialists, and the root word of socialism is "social". We suggest working in pairs. It improves the quality of communication, makes work less lonely, and ensures tasks get done.

Provide social time and activities. Endless work drives people away. Schedule social time at the beginning and end of meetings, or set aside time every couple of weeks to hold a party. Turn routine tasks into social events; for example, stuff envelopes while sharing pizza. Some YSA chapters organize "Commie Sporting League" events, "Marxmas" parties, or "Red Poets on the Beach" nights. There are endless ideas for how to bring comrades together to have some fun and get to know each other better. And be sure to mark your calendars for YSA's annual Camp Class Struggle event, which is a great place for YSAers from all over to come together and have a good time!

Provide skills training. Provide skill-building workshops and on-the-job training. Simply pairing experienced and inexperienced people will improve the skills of new members. Training in leadership, group facilitating, selling the newspaper and coalition work are important enough to warrant special weekend workshops.

Politics! And last, but by no means least, is our politics. The number one thing we have to offer our members, and humanity as a whole, is our politics. Our political program is an attempt to accumulate the lessons of the past victories and defeats of the working class. Educating ourselves about our politics, and especially new members, is the most important way to convince people the important of being part of Youth for Socialist Action.

Starting a YSA Chapter

Most members join YSA through existing chapters, but since we're still a small organization, if there isn't a YSA chapter in your area you'll have to join as an at-large member. As an at-larger we will try to work with you to come up with a personalized reading list and education plan, and help you in any way we can to pull together a new YSA chapter around you.

Here is a check-list we've put together of some of the things you can do to start a YSA chapter in your area:

1. Get in touch with the nearest YSA branch or the YSA National Office. We can help you in setting up a local group by doing things such as:

- Putting you in touch with other YSA members and contacts who may live in your area.
- Helping answer any questions you may have.
- Letting you know what actions are coming up and what campaigns YSA is currently engaged in for you to help organize around and promote.
- And, we can send you out an organizers' package of bulletins from YSA, and our predecessor, the Young Socialist Alliance, that contain lots of useful information about organizing and our politics.

2. Find some people who are willing to help you.

- You may already know some people who are interested in getting active in with a group like YSA. That's a start.
- Call them up, ask them if they're interested in helping, organize a chance to meet them.
- Put up a flier saying you're interested in starting up a YSA chapter with an email address or phone number for people to contact you.
- Set up a literature table with a banner, some YSA & Socialist Action literature (contact the N.O. for some brochures, etc.) and a clip board.
- Order a bundle of Socialist Action newspaper to hawk on campus or at a demonstration. It can be a great way to meet people as well as introduce them to socialist politics.
- Organize a study group on socialism with some friends.
- Call a meeting and see who shows up.

3. How to organize a meeting.

- At your school/college, pick a convenient time to call a YSA meeting.
- Reserve a room or pick a quiet spot where people can sit and talk. Some schools let students reserve rooms themselves, others require a teacher. If nothing else meet in a lounge or a part of the cafeteria. You might even try holding it at someone's house.
- Get the word out: tell people that you know and ask them to tell others; put out a leaflet to post up and hand around. Use every medium you can, phone, email, bulletin boards, fliers, word of mouth, the U.S. Post Office, anything and everything.

4. The first meeting.

- Tell people why you've called the meeting and a little bit about YSA and the kind of things we do. Talk about ongoing campaigns or local activist issues.
- Allow time for people to ask questions or raise their own ideas. Discussion is a good thing.
- From there, you can discuss what the group should do and work out how it can be done. A good collective discussion will leave everyone excited and with something to do.
- If you like, we might be able to send a speaker to come out and answer questions.
- Get everyone's name and phone number. Set a time and place for the next meeting.

5. Putting the "action" into Youth for Socialist Action.

There are all sorts of ways to plug your new group into activism. The best way is to focus your attention on a

particular issue or upcoming action. Pick something that is of concern to people. Here are some general tips for promoting an issue or publicizing an event.

- ▼ Put up posters everywhere you can.
- ▼ Hand out leaflets or fact sheets to other people at your school/college, at other nearby schools/colleges, and at public places.
- ▼ Organize a coalition around specific demands and slogans if one doesn't already exist, or plug into the existing coalition.
- ▼ Try to get a broad array of speakers for any event.
- ▼ Organize a YSA or school contingent for the action, make up picket signs.

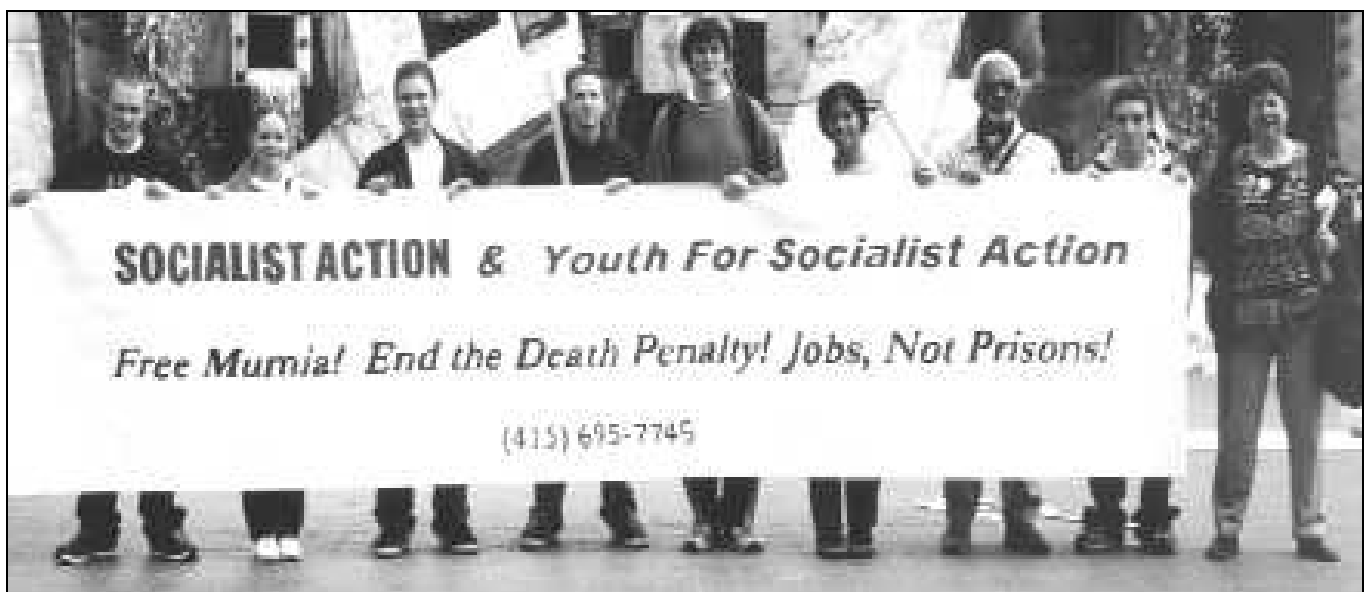
6. Learning about the “socialism” of Youth for Socialist Action.

We believe there can be no revolutionary action without revolution theory, therefore YSA places a great deal of emphasis on education. Each chapter should try to organize study groups and presentations to educate its members.

- ▼ Make sure everyone has a subscription to Socialist Action newspaper.
- ▼ Print out the “ABCs of Socialism” essays from the Theory page on the Socialist Action website and distribute to all new YSA members.
- ▼ Find out what issues people are most interested and organize a study group or class. Materials are available from the Theory page on the YSA website, and from the YSA National Office.
- ▼ Encourage members to use the YSA Recommended Reading lists.
- ▼ Organize presentations at chapter meetings on the positions that YSA holds (the 10 Point Program or What Socialists Stand For essay would be good source material).

7. Co-ordinate with the YSA National Office.

- ▼ Keep the National Office up to date about your progress.
- ▼ Find out what YSA & Socialist Action literature is available.
- ▼ Plug into any national YSA meetings, conferences or campaigns, such as our annual Camp Class Struggle event.
- ▼ Write for and help distribute Socialist Action newspaper, and the YSA website.
- ▼ Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.



Publicity Techniques

Effective publicity is essential to the success of any event or campaign. Since the power the revolutionary movement has relies on people, getting the word out is one of the most important things you will do. It requires a well-thought-out strategy and plan.

Strategic Considerations

Visibility. People should know about your event or campaign even if they're completely oblivious to everything else going on at your school.

Simplicity. Keep your message short, understandable, and simple. People should get a good idea of what you're doing with just a brief description.

Language. Don't use jargon, slogans, or acronyms without defining them. A complex issue can be explained in ways that even the most apathetic can understand.

Creativity. Much publicity on campuses is dull, dull, dull. Be creative! One group put messages about their campaign in fortune cookies and handed them out. Colorful, visual, irreverent, interactive, 3-dimensional, eye-catching publicity is more effective. But don't let creativity obscure your message.

Repetition. People should hear or read about your event at least seven times. No kidding. After the first few times, people who might not otherwise come or participate will become interested.

Reputation. You do publicity both for your event and for your group in general. There is nothing wrong or shameful about promoting your group by clearly listing YSA's name, a contact person the time of your next meeting, how people can get involved, etc.

Publicity Ideas

Personal Contact/Word of Mouth. Personal contact is one of the best (and cheapest) means of publicity. Each of your members can bring at least a half dozen people. Ask professors to announce events in class or to let you do so.

Knowing the Regulations. Most schools have designated areas where you can post things and procedures for tabling. Know the regulations and the penalties. Some schools impose heavy fines for violations and may even rescind funding or official recognition. If you post off-campus, the local community's laws apply. This is not to say that you must always accept such rules. If the rules are so draconian that they infringe on your freedom of speech you may want to start a campaign to challenge them. If you are challenging your school's administration, you may find yourself the target of politically-motivated selective enforcement of such rules.

Poster Design. Keep it short, simple, loud, and eye-catching. Make your main message BIG-- people should be able to see it from 20 feet away. Make the rest of your text SHORT-- people should be able to read it in one minute. Keep it visually consistent-- more than one font or more than two colors is distracting. Don't make it too CROWDED-- by filling every space on the page. In fact, leaving blank space calls attention to the text. Pictures and graphics can really add to a poster if they are clear and powerful. Don't forget to clearly lay out the time, date, and place of the event.

Where and when to poster. High-traffic areas such as dining halls, campus centers, etc. are good places. You will be competing for space and attention with every other group on campus. Don't limit your posting to one area of campus or just high traffic areas. There are many good spots to poster where you have a "captive

audience" which has nothing to do but read your poster. Bathroom stalls, cafeteria lines, and bus stops are a few such places. On most campuses, bulletin boards are cleared of posters regularly. Put your posters up in remote areas several weeks in advance. Re-poster high-traffic areas several times leading up to the event, with a final blitz a day or two before.

Leafletting. Leafletting a busy intersection, mail room or dining hall gets information to a large number of people. Leaflets are good for publicizing an immediate and urgent event, like an emergency rally, and for distributing info to passersby at demonstrations, or actions. One person can distribute several hundred leaflets in an hour. You will need quite a few and should probably make them 1/2, 1/3 or 1/4-page size to save money and paper. In the leaflet itself, ask people to pass it on to someone else or post it. Have more than one person leafletting at once. Be ready for rejections, as many people will ignore you, and even make snide remarks.

Newspapers. You can put ads in your school newspaper, but the price is usually high, and such ads are usually not as effective as posters. There are other ways to use your school newspaper for publicity. Many school papers sell much cheaper classified ads. Many also have calendars of what's going on around campus, which list events for free or cheaply. Letters to the editor and even guest editorials are a good way to publicize, if you don't make it a completely apparent self-promotion. One group ran classified ads that pretended to be a dialogue between two lovelorn people flirting with each other. Everyone read and followed the saga. Some school papers are so starved for news that they will even do an article about your upcoming event.

Radio. Many radio stations, especially college stations, run free public service announcements. Send them an event notice or find out how to do a PSA tape yourself. Encourage DJs to play them during their shows.

Phone Trees. When you want to mobilize your supporters, a phone tree is an extremely useful and efficient tool. You can start a phone tree committee by passing out a sign-up sheet at a general meeting. From this list, elect a phone tree coordinator (usually an officer or a steering committee member, because they will most likely be aware of what is going on) who is in responsible for triggering the phone tree. The phone tree coordinator organizes the information to be disseminated, then calls phone tree committee members, who each have a list of people to call with information about the next meeting or event. For meetings, you only notify members of your group; for large public events, you could assign each core member to notify 5-10 additional supporters to turn out a really large crowd. The phone tree coordinator should be sure to check with committee members to see if they made their calls, and be prepared to take up the slack. Email can be used the same way

Chalking. Chalking on the sidewalks is as visible as spray painting, and it washes right off. Groups have used chalked body outlines to publicize human rights abuses or oppose military action. Chalking doesn't require any paper and the words can be as big as you like. Rules differ from campus to campus on whether chalking is allowed. Campus police may harass you if they see you in the act. Try to keep your chalking on the ground, as it doesn't wash off as readily on walls and the chalk can cause damage if it stays on a long time.

"Midnight Redecorating". Midnight redecorating is a term for activities done late at night because they may prove unpopular with some authorities, such as spray-painting, rubber stamps, Cow chalk (semi permanent) or wheat pasting posters. Spray-painting can be done with heavy poster board cut stencils of a slogan or graphic, or it can be done freehand. Stickers placed on phone booths, elevator ceilings, water fountains, stairwells, and "University Property" decals are difficult to remove. Note: we do not advocate indoor wheat-pasting, which can seriously damage your group's reputation; outdoor wheatpasting is far less destructive, but still may put you at risk of arrest.

- To make stickers, you can purchase 100 sheets of 8 1/2 x 11" sticker paper for about \$20. Then, using a heavy-duty copy machine and paper cutter, you can make stickers -- usually 3 or 4 per page.
- To make wheat paste, mix: wallpaper glue + flour + water; apply with a paint brush or wallpaper brush.

- To make "spray glue," mix: 1/3 parts Elmers glue + 2/3 parts water in a plant spray bottle; apply with rubber gloves.

Information Tables. Most campuses designate an area where student organizations can set up tables to distribute literature and recruit members. Many activists think that tabling is a boring ritual consisting of a stack of literature on a table with a person sitting behind it doing homework or staring into space. Nothing could be further from the truth. Tabling must be active and dynamic in order to yield results.

- Table when you have something for people to do, and not just for the sake of tabling. At the activities midway, it's O.K. to just ask for new members, but the rest of the time, try to get people to do something specific like sign a petition, buy a ticket for a fundraiser, write a letter, or sign up to work on a specific campaign. Always be sure to have a sign-up sheet available (see Sustaining your Membership and Support Base) to build membership.
- Keep a schedule of who is to table, and have a tabling coordinator reconfirm them the night before! Make sure people know where to pick up the tabling box in the morning, and where to drop it off (a secure place if you collect money) in the afternoon.
- Try to table where there will be a large concentration of people. Dining halls near meal time, Student Unions or Centers, and films and events attract a lot of people in a short time.
- Its best to have two or more people tabling together, preferably pairing less experienced people with veteran activists. Have one of them work the flow of people and draw people to other activists sitting at the table.
- Training is invaluable. Write and distribute sample raps and practice with role plays. This gives people confidence and prepares them to deal with tough situations.
- Display a banner with your organization's name to develop recognition, a sign and flyers advertising your next meeting and upcoming events.
- Be friendly and make eye contact. Entice passersby by asking a brief question to involve the person a dialogue, such as "Do you want to help stop ROTC discrimination?"
- Know when to call it quits. Don't get caught up with a reactionary or someone who just wants to talk. Give them literature, set a future meeting, invite them to an event, but don't waste your time while other potential activists pass you by.
- Clipboards are your friends. They allow you to get out from behind the table and ask people to sign up to do something, whether it be making a phone call, going to a rally, or joining your campus coalition.
- Having a VCR and a TV showing an appropriate documentary (at low volume!) at your table is a good way to attract people.
- Giving away pins or stickers is a terrific way to build visibility and boost morale.
- Do not limit tabling to campus. Tabling in the community will: put you in touch with a wide range of people & views, and expose people in the community to ideas they won't normally hear in the mainstream media. By meeting progressive people and activists who might attend some of your meetings and events, you build essential links between your campus and the community.



Media & Press Releases

Suggestions for attracting the media to larger YSA or coalition events:

- Make a list of places to send press releases. Include the "Assignment Desk" at all local TV news stations (including cable) and daily newspapers. Include the "news editor" at key campus publications, local weekly papers, and radio stations with big news departments. Also include the "News Desk" and "Photo desk" at the nearest offices of Associated Press. Finally, add any "education journalists" specifically assigned to cover events at your campus as well as weekly TV news shows. Call in advance to get the names of these people. For each outlet, include its name, address, phone number, and fax number in your list.
- 10 days before your event, mail a press advisory to weekly papers or TV shows and follow up in 3 days.
- Mail your press release to the entire list so that it will arrive 3 business days before your event and call them 2 days before the event. Use a formal, upbeat style. Don't read a long pitch. Pause frequently, so that the reporter will have a chance to give you feedback. That way you can tell whether he or she is actually considering covering your event. Make sure you take neat notes on whether the reaction you get is "no way," "maybe," or "probably."
- The day of the event, call each media outlet.
- Have someone at your event designated to be the media contact person.
- Befriend and cultivate good relations with the media. If possible, designate one person to follow up with reporters who seemed particularly receptive.

Press Release Suggestions

A press release should include the rationale for an event, what you are trying to change, and all relevant information that you would want to be considered by a journalist, but keep it brief. Include your strongest facts or stances. Reporters may use your exact words and text of your release. One page with all event information is standard. At the top of your press release, include the date you want the information to first be announced (usually the day of the event, never later). Immediately below, include the names of at least two press spokespeople, one of which must be available during business hours. Right below that, write the title, time, date, location, directions, and names of participants in your event.

Have a group of people has a review the drafts of the press release. This group will be able to divide the work of follow up calls.

The body of your release should be written in clear simple English, with short sentences so that it could be read on the air. The first sentence should describe the whole event: "Two hundred students rallied today at the University of Buffalo to demand a 50% reduction in their tuition, which is now \$15,000 per year." The rest of the release should explain everything so simply and clearly that your aunt or your grandfather would understand what you were trying to accomplish.

What about press conferences?

A press conference is a formal presentation of your case designed exclusively for the press. The key question to ask when deciding whether to have a press conference is, "Will reporters come?" You will be best off when there is some other big event to which your press conference can serve as a form of "counterdemonstration." Or when a big story that has been brewing for weeks or months finally breaks, such as the results of a campus referendum. A press conference announcement only needs to be one page long, usually with the information about time, location, topic, participants, etc. spelled out in outline form. Make sure reporters receive it two days before the event. Follow up calls should be made to key reporters and then on the morning of the event.

Fundraising

Life under capitalism sucks, and one of the reasons is because almost everything costs money. For that reason, it's important for revolutionaries to take fundraising seriously. Apart from the annual \$10 a year dues that Youth for Socialist Action charges, all of our money for operating and organizing comes from donations and fundraising. Below are some fundraising ideas:

Ask frequently. Churches are some of the best fundraisers because they ask every week. Good fundraisers ask at every opportunity.

Ask publicly. Social pressure helps people part with their money. Again, the churches provide a model.

Ask personally. It is easier to toss a piece of direct mail than it is to refuse a real person.

Ask volunteers. They have already shown they want to help. Contributing financially strengthens their commitment.

Ask for amounts that will make a difference. Citizens groups have a habit of asking for far too little. They might charge \$2 for membership rather than a useful \$20. When raising money for a campaign, they aim for \$1,000 instead of an effective \$10,000.

Avoid events needing a lot of up-front cash. Events that require expensive prizes can lose money. Raise more money than you intend to spend. Extra money lets you address unforeseen difficulties, and exploit unforeseen opportunities.

Spare Change Cans. In YSA we call them "Change 4 Change" cans, and you'd be surprised how much spare change can add up!

Individual contributions. Asking for contributions from local people turns fundraising into community/movement building. People become more attached to groups, projects, and places they feel they own. Money can come from memberships, voluntary subscriptions to newsletters, collections at meetings, door-to-door canvassing, planned giving, memorial giving, and mail fund appeals.

In-kind donations. Seek in-kind or non-monetary contributions. This includes donations of printing, equipment, furniture, space, services, food, stamps, envelopes, and time.

Contests. The way to make money on a contest is to sell votes — one for 50 cents, a booklet for five dollars. Purchasers can use them to vote for their favorite entry in some fun contest. Contests can raise a lot of money as people try to stack the vote for their favorite. Winners usually get a prize. Auctions are similar idea.

Fundraising dinners. This standby succeeds if you charge a lot more than the dinner costs. It helps to be able to keep what is earned on the bar. People come to fundraising dinners to help the cause and schmooze with other like-minded people.

Fundraising concerts. Know any lefty bands? Ask them to do a benefit concert with a cover for the cause!

Fundraising party. Our movement has a tradition called the "rent party" — when a comrade or co-worker is unable to make the rent and is threatened with eviction, a party would be held with a cover charge to raise the rent. The same concept can be used for more general fundraising parties.

Tips on Giving Speeches & Presentations

Giving speeches and presentations is one of the most basic ways that an activist can communicate their ideas. That's why Youth for Socialist Action puts so much time and energy into organizing frequent forums, classes and teach-ins. We encourage every member to develop at least a little experience with public speaking.

Public Speaking Tips:

Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and healthy. It shows you care about doing well. But, too much nervousness can be detrimental. Here's how you can control your nervousness and make effective, memorable presentations:

Know the room. Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and try practicing using the microphone and any visual aids.

Know the audience. Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.

Know your material. If you're not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech and revise it if necessary.

Relax. Ease tension by going for a walk, doing some basic stretching, chatting with colleagues.

Realize that people want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, and informative. They don't want you to fail.

Don't apologize. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Avoid pointing out your own imagined inadequacies, your audience has a higher opinion of you than you think.

Concentrate on the message -- not the medium. Focus your attention away from your own anxieties, and outwardly toward your message and your audience. Your nervousness will dissipate.

Turn nervousness into positive energy. Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.

Gain experience. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.

Tips for handling Q & A:

- If you don't hear the question or understand it, ask the questioner to repeat it.
- Try to keep calm, even if your audience is hostile or upset.
- Always respect the questioner, even if you do not like the question or the manner in which it is posed.
- Don't feel offended if someone asks you a question that you feel you already answered in your presentation or a previous question, they may not have heard or understood the information previously presented.
- Honesty is the best policy, if you don't know the answer to something, admit it - you can offer to get in contact with the person later with an answer.

Organizing a Demonstration

Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a *coalition* of groups and individuals. YSA has a long tradition of being effective coalition and protest organizers. As with organizing any event, it is essential to bring together a key group of people who are committed to the project. It is also useful to reach out to other groups to see if they would want to contribute to the demonstration.

Some questions to think about when organizing:

- Who else (student, professor, campus group, etc.) might be interested in helping to plan the demonstration?
- Do other schools (universities, community colleges, high schools etc.) have planned activities?
- Who are the natural allies in the community?
- Who of other political stripes may you be able to go into coalition with? There are some groupings out there that could be called surprising and take the power of a movement to new levels. For example, when labor and environmentalists get together against globalization, they are unstoppable.

Assign tasks and determine roles

Make sure everyone knows their assigned tasks. One person should be assigned to each of the following tasks:

- Protest emcee.
- Getting the required permits, and if necessary, being in contact with the police.
- Working with the media-outreach and follow up.
- Developing signs, art, and chants.
- Turnout person (getting the folks there!).

Location-location-location/permits and officials

Hold your demonstration where there is a lot of traffic. Because you want to connect with as many people as possible, visibility is key. A lousy location can undermine the best organized demonstration. Make sure to:

- Know your rights regarding the use of space.
- Talk to the campus or community police about your demonstration and determine what permits you need.
- Have required campus permits for demonstrations, especially if you will be using amplified sound such as bullhorns.

Get the word out: Turnout is crucial

Large numbers of people at your protest demonstrates broad public support for your cause. Both the media and the decision makers you are trying to influence will be looking closely at the number of people at your protest to see if you have real community backing.

Planning:

- Bringing music to the event will increase attendance massively.
- Develop a specific strategy for outreach and publicity.
- Set a goal for the number of people you want at the demonstration.
- Create a plan for reaching out to *10 to 100 times* as many people as you hope will be there.
- Assume that only a fraction of the people you contact will actually show up.

Successful outreach requires production of materials like event fliers and email alerts.

Distribution suggestions:

- Students, professors, classes and colleagues.
- Student union, coffee shops, campus events, bulletin boards, cultural centers.
- Campus newspaper and radio station.
- The sooner you have materials ready, the better, especially in regards to media.

Organize Speakers and Schedule:

You will want speakers at your event, regardless of what type of event. Things to keep in mind:

- Decide on the order in which you want your speakers to address the crowd.
- Give speaker about two or three minutes and ask them to keep it short.
- Make sure you have an emcee that is in charge of the speakers' order. It's this person's responsibility to bring a bullhorn or amplifier and to keep the program moving smoothly.

Develop Slogans and Chanting:

- Prepare chants: Come up with a chant that might make people smile.
- Brainstorm catchy slogans that can be learned quickly by a crowd. Be as creative as you can.
- Make copies of the chants to give out to fellow demonstrators.
- Have someone in charge of leading people in the chants.

Create Signs and Other Materials:

Colorful signs are *essential* for capturing people's attention. Some suggestions include:

- Use bold letters.
- Have clear messages—the fewer words, the better.
- Paint your signs by hand or enlarge photos that illustrate your issue.
- Make sure your signs are readable from far away and make for good photo-ops.
- The use of sarcasm or a play on words can be an effective way of communicating.

Print Literature and Handouts:

It's important that you bring information to hand out—some sort of postcard, fact sheet or flier that discusses your issue. Many students will not have time between classes to hang out and learn about the issue. If you give them something to stick in their pocket, chances are that they will read it later. And remember to include the Socialist Action website – www.socialistaction.org!

Puppets and Other Props:

Life-size puppets offer a fantastic way to dramatize your issue, and they make a great visual for television cameras.

- Art will make your demonstration more fun for those involved and will draw attention.



Protest Chants

Every good demonstration needs some chants! Below are some chants for different issues that you might want to try out for your local protests:

1, 2, 3, 4, Not in Our Name Any More!

The workers, united, will never be defeated!

1, 2, 3, 4, We Don't Want Your Racist War!

Money for Schools (or jobs), Not for War!

Out of Palestine Out of Iraq
What do we do? Stand up fight back!

What's disgusting?
Union busting!

It's outrageous to cut workers wages!

They say downsize, we say organize!

Out of Afghanistan Out of Iraq
Out of Palestine And don't come back!

say who can stop the war
say we can stop the war!

Money for Jobs Not for war!

George Bush, military hack
Out of Afghanistan, Hands off Iraq!

What do we want? U.S. Out!
When do we want it? Now!

No justice, no peace, no racist police!

Brick by brick, wall by wall,
We're gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The people of the world are under attack,
Out of Afghanistan! Hands off Iraq!

Hey hey, ho ho!
This racist war has got to go!

Cops and Klan go hand in hand!

USA CIA Hands off IRAQ

President Bush You Can't Hide we Charge You with
Genocide!

1, 2, 3, 4, We Won't Die For Texaco!

Can we win it, yes we can,
Free abortion on demand!

Politicians don't care,
When innocent people get the chair!

Exxon gets rich, Iraqi children die.

Hey cops, what do you say?
How many gays did you bash today?

The real terrorist in the World today, The Pentagon and the
CIA

No more lining pockets of the corporations,
Fighting wars with smaller nations!

There ain't no power like the of the people,
Cause the power of the people don't stop!

Iraq is not the enemy,
War is not the answer!

U.S. Hands Off Iraq!

Inspect the Pentagon, not Iraq!
U.S. out now, and don't back!

Smash the Pentagon and not Iraq!
What do we do, stand up, fight back!

No blood for oil!
Hands off Iraq!

Hey hey ho ho,
Imperialist War has Got to Go!

Gay & Straight,
Unite and fight!

Abortion is a Right,
Fight, fight, fight!

Gay and proud,
Say it loud!

Stop the war on the poor!

Black and white,
Unite and fight!

Not the church, not the state;
Women must decide their fate!

Capitalists, rich and rude –
We don't like your attitude!

Petitioning Rights in Public Places

***Note:** This is a legal brief prepared for activists petitioning to get a third party on the ballot. This form of political expression may be slightly more protected than whatever you may be petitioning/flyering for.*

Some things to keep in mind and some key jargon to use with store management, park management, police, and other entities that would enjoy kicking us out of certain areas of the planet when we petition.

The Supreme Court has ruled several times on which property is open to the public and which is not. In recent years, they have narrowed this interpretation, but the base has remained the same, namely that the Court now engages in a "forum" approach. First, they classify the area that is disputed as a certain kind of "forum" - then the activities that allowed follows automatically from that designation. Some practical examples:

Traditional Public Forums. Those areas that are traditionally held places in which democratic conversation and solicitation have taken place. These include public sidewalks and public parks.

Activities Allowed. Any as long as they do not interfere with public health or safety. These public forums would be open for any type of petitioning, especially because the courts have been especially careful to safeguard "political speech" which goes to the core of the beliefs of our government - open and accessible political systems.

Limited Public Forums. These are areas in which the local government or agency has chosen to make available as a "forum" area, and has opened up the area to other groups and individuals.

Activities Allowed. Petitioning would be allowed in these areas, if these areas have been opened up to other speakers or other petitioners. An example would be YSA requesting the use of a school cafeteria in which to hold a rally at night. This would have to be allowed if the school regularly opens the cafeteria up for the use of other groups and organizations. In other words, if the forum is opened up to one group, it must be opened to all groups - to do otherwise would be an infringement on free speech rights of the group that is denied access.

Nonpublic forums. Any area not traditionally opened up for public use, and any area not designated as a public forum. I.E. if the area does not qualify for the above, then it falls into this category.

Activities Allowed. Only those which are not excluded by regulations. These regulations must pass a simple test: they must be "viewpoint neutral" (not discriminatory) and must only regulate the time, place, and manner of the speech. Petitioning would probably not be allowed in these areas.

Legal Jargon. The only thing that really needs to be remembered is that sidewalks that run along public streets, and public parks are completely and utterly open to petitioners. How do we know? Because the Supreme Court has said so:

United States v. Kokinda, 497 U.S. 3115 (1990) (sidewalks)

Board of Airport Commissioners v. Jews for Jesus, 482 U.S. 569 (1987) (airport terminals as nonpublic forums, supporting forum analysis)

Ward v. Rock Against Racism, 491 U.S. 781 (1989) (public parks)

Niemotko v. Maryland, 340 U.S. 268 (1951) (bible talks in public park)



What to Do When the State Frames Up Activists

Unconditional defense of victims of capitalist oppression or state persecution has a long history in the working class. The International Labor Defense (ILD) was founded in 1926 by James P. Cannon in collaboration with IWW leader Big Bill Haywood who, himself, was living in Moscow to escape a twenty-year frame-up sentence.

The ILD drew up a list of 106 political activists who were victimized by capitalist courts. Each case of these long-forgotten fighters for social justice was publicized. The class bias of the courts, cops and politicians was exposed and the full force of labor solidarity was mobilized. Demonstrations and picket-lines were organized in many cities. No one stood alone.

While the ILD was the chief international defender of Sacco and Vanzetti, it also supported dozens of lesser-known anarchists and union organizers. Each prisoner received a regular stipend and holiday gift. Every contribution was receipted and listed in the ILD newspaper. In fact, the financial records of the ILD were open to inspection by the whole workers' movement.

But the ILD was best known for its completely non-sectarian approach to defense. While the ILD was largely sustained through the efforts of the Communist Party (CP), it is noteworthy that not one of its cases involved a Communist Party member. Cannon successfully prevented the bitter sectarian disputes inside the CP from interfering with the functioning of the ILD. All victims of capitalist persecution were defended regardless of their individual political orientation. The class principle "an injury to one is an injury to all" found political expression in the ILD.

Nature of Frame-ups

Class solidarity is the most powerful weapon of the working class. Our strategy, therefore, seeks to maximize the political unity of the working class.

In defense cases, it is important to recognize that the capitalist class often uses more than physical violence against its victims. Using the full resources of its state apparatus, capitalism has tremendous capacity to distort, manipulate, and even invent "facts" and "evidence" against opponents of the status quo. Institutions like the FBI, CIA and National Security Council purposely exist to disrupt, disorient and discredit social protest movements and even governments which oppose imperialist policies.

The Bay of Tonkin provocation was staged in 1964 in order to justify sending more U.S. troops to Vietnam. Even though we did not have the facts, we correctly took the word of the Vietnamese fighters against the U.S. government's description of the event. Several decades later, documents have proved that the U.S. government did indeed provoke the incident.

We always take the word of the oppressed against the capitalists. This is true even when we do not have hard supporting evidence. We simply do not possess the resources to unravel all aspects of a complex web which is essential for a successful frame-up.

But the capitalist state does have these resources. In many instances, for example, there is ample "evidence" which supposedly proves the guilt of the accused. Numerous eyewitnesses are produced and physical evidence is supplied which backs up the prosecution's case.

The frame-ups of the Black Panther Party members, the Wilmington 10 and Joanne Little all occurred in the last twenty years but they differed little from the earlier frame-ups of Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti, and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.

In each case, evidence was manufactured to obtain convictions. Racist and anti-communist prejudice was the glue which kept these dirty frame-ups from crumbling.

We unconditionally and automatically accept the word of working-class fighters or victims of racial and sexual abuse against the word of cops or other agents of the capitalist state. This is true even when the state's case rests on the testimony of alleged victims, who themselves, are Black, Latino, women or unionists.

Many of the prosecution witnesses against the Black Panthers were Black. The John Sayles film, *Matewan*, records an historical incident where the leading mineworker's union organizer was framed-up for rape by testimony from a working-class woman. This type of manipulation, and more, has reoccurred numerous times.

Quick Response

An immediate response to appeals for aid from the oppressed or sections of the working class movement is absolutely necessary to stop or limit the extent of victimization. Capitalists must be taught that attacks on individuals or organizations opposed to the status quo will meet resistance from the whole movement – and fast.

Solidarity is, therefore, fundamentally conceived as a mass action oriented political approach, not a limp moral sentiment.

To ensure this automatic reflex, we must have absolute trust among ourselves. We trust the word of a comrade above anything else. This mutual confidence is an indispensable component of building a revolutionary party. Our confidence in one another is based on our common acceptance of a class-struggle program. Socialist Action fights to build a world free from class oppression, violence, racism and sexism. We have no interest in stealing, raping, murdering, or drug-running. Only capitalists and their cronies profit from these crimes.

We also have stringent membership requirements inside Socialist Action. Currently, we have a three month provisional membership period to acquaint a potential member with our norms. We never lie to each other, we never do anything to discredit our ideas or organization, we never engage in illegal activities, and we never violate the majority decisions of our organization.

We have democratic procedures to deal with instances where infractions or our membership norms occur. These measures, when necessary, serve to uphold the Leninist norms necessary for a revolutionary party, not the least of which is that we never lie to each other.

But sometimes rumors crop up or linger which question the loyalty of a comrade. This has happened several times in the working-class movement. Lenin, Trotsky and James P. Cannon always had the same approach. These matters have to be settled with great speed and decisiveness. No question marks about one's integrity can hand over the heads of party members.

Control commissions are useful in protecting the party against unsubstantiated rumor campaigns. This was the case with comrade Sylvia Franklin, who was Cannon's secretary in the Socialist Workers Party national office. Louis Budenz, an ex-Stalinist turned FBI informant, implicated Sylvia as a Stalinist agent. A federal grand jury included her name on a list of people supposedly in the employ of the GPU (the predecessor of the KGB). Others repeated the charge.

The rumors became so serious that a control commission was convened in 1950 to determine the facts. In this example, no evidence was found. Sylvia's name was completely cleared. In the interest of party unity, all questions of her loyalty were put to rest, even by comrades who had expressed doubts.

Where no firm and indisputable evidence exists, the word of a comrade is always believed. And all comrades are treated equally.

In order to set such an example, Lenin publicly supported Malinovsky as head of the Bolshevik contingent in the Duma (czarist Russia's parliament) even though there were numerous rumors that he was a Czarist agent. Though there was substantial evidence that Malinovsky was a spy, including information provided by several Bolsheviks, it

was all circumstantial and on “indisputable” as Trotsky said referring to a similar case.

Under Lenin’s leadership, the Bolsheviks decided that it was more politically damaging for the party to question the word of a comrade than it was to suffer the very real physical dangers inherent in having a possible spy as the Duma fraction head. After the revolution, Czarist documents proved that Malinovsky was indeed a spy. During the investigating committee of the affair, Lenin commented that the Czar did not gain as much from having a spy among the Bolsheviks “as much as our Party did from Pravda and the whole legal [Duma] apparatus. The agent provocateur had to serve both these organs in order to justify his vocation. Both these organs were under our immediate guidance . . . [and] policy was entirely determined by the resolutions of the Party.”

Thus, Lenin understood that the membership’s understanding of the revolutionary Marxist program, combined with the democratic decision making structures of the party, was the best protection against provocative political twists and turns being forced upon the party by the intervention of a spy.

Under similar circumstances twenty years later, Trotsky acted exactly the same way to preserve an atmosphere of total trust and confidence with the party ranks. Joseph Hansen writes in *Intercontinental Press* on August 9, 1976, that “Trotsky was insistent on our maintaining confidence in each other – of not engaging in spy-hunting, and above all of not permitting disinformation planted by the GPU or other police to sow suspicion and disruption among our own ranks. Trotsky followed this rule himself. For instance, “in the absence of convincing proof that ‘Etienne’ (Zborowski) was guilty of disloyalty or of being an agent, Trotsky and Sedov maintained their confidence in him.”

As a matter of fact, a control commission was organized in Coyoacan, Mexico to investigate the rumors about Etienne, but it found nothing. Years later, it was discovered that Etienne had been a Stalinist agent working in the international headquarters of the Fourth International. In fact, he may have been responsible for the death of Leon Sedov (Trotsky’s son). Nonetheless, Trotsky insisted that although it was quite impossible to completely guard against repression and infiltration by capitalist or Stalinist agents, it was quite possible to destroy the party by incriminating each other.

The Communist Party paid a heavy price when it abandoned this approach. Numerous expulsions of loyal and dedicated members occurred in the 1950’s as a result of false information planted by the FBI which was not sufficiently corroborated by “indisputable” evidence.

A similar disruption occurred inside the Black Panther Party in the 1960’s. Innocent members were expelled based on information which was later found to be part of the FBI’s COINTELPRO program.

During the same period, the FBI manufactured a racist letter from an “anonymous” Socialist Workers Party member to Kwame Somburu (a leading Black spokesperson for the SWP). The letter was obviously designed to cause racial strife inside the SWP. A national leader of the SWP spoke during a discussion of the letter in the New York branch and stated that he suspected that it was concocted by the FBI. In any case, he said, no “member of the SWP was capable of writing such a letter.” The disruption attempt did not work because of the mutual confidence SWP members had in each other’s commitment to a revolutionary program. FBI documents later proved that the letter did originate from the government finks.

As a result of these lessons, we never doubt the loyalty of any member. Not for a minute. It has nothing to do with any “good old boy” clique sentiments. It’s our class-struggle concept of building a Leninist combat party which requires strict adherence to this policy.

While most of this report has dwelled on the crucial importance of solidarity within our own party, we extend this same trust and confidence to rebel fighters everywhere. Our solidarity with the oppressed and other sections of the workers’ movement is based on our common pro-working class orientation against capitalist injustice. We solidarize with all fighters for a better world and with all oppressed victims of this system.